The Exhaustion Particles in the Yi group: A Unified Approach to *All*, the *Completive* and the *Superlative*

MATTHIAS GERNER
City University of Hong Kong

Abstract

The exhaustion particles of the Yi languages (Tibeto-Burman languages from Southwest China) are sentence-end morphemes with a surprising wealth of possible interpretations. With gradeable states they convey the meaning of *superlative* ('most'), with accomplishments they function as *completive* particle ('exhaustively'), and in ungradeable states, activities or achievements they act as *all* particles, i.e. as universal non-distributive quantifiers, on the first argument.

A unified account of the *all-*, *completive-* and *superlative*-meanings is proposed. It is argued that all three notions basically divide their respective domain (= objects, events or states) into three types: a singular domain type, a quantized domain type and a homogeneous domain type. For events there is also a fourth domain type, the bounded domain type, which does not have an analogy with objects and states.

	Object-denotations	Event-denotations	State-denotations
Singular	Individual OD	Punctual ED	Ungradeable SD
Quantized	Quantized OD	Quantized ED	State with quantized comparison class
Bounded	—	Bounded ED	—
Homogeneous	Homogeneous OD	Homogeneous ED	State with homogeneous comparison class

The *all-*, the *completive-* and the *superlative*-meanings of the exhaustion particles have in common that they are incompatible with entities from the singular domain type, (in general) pragmatically implausible with entities from the homogeneous domain type, and compatible with entities from the quantized domain type.

1 INTRODUCTION

Numerous authors have pointed to parallels between nominal and verbal semantic structure (e.g. Link 1983; Bach 1986; Krifka 1989,